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May 13, 2008

David McClain, Ph.D.
President
University of Hawaii
Bachman Hall
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Dear President McClain:

I wanted to report to you about an excellent meeting I had in Washington, D.C. regarding the Thirty-Meter Telescope (TMT) with Dr. Henry Yang, Chancellor, University of California at Santa Barbara, Dr. Jean-Lou Chameau, President, California Institute of Technology, Dr. Rose Tseng, Chancellor, University of Hawaii at Hilo, and Dr. Rockne Freitas, Chancellor, Hawaii Community College. The meeting was productive and informative.

I thanked both Dr. Yang and Dr. Chameau in their capacities as Chair and Vice Chair of the TMT Selection Committee for their willingness to seriously consider Mauna Kea as a site for the TMT, rather than to simply locate the telescope in Chile. Chile may be "easier" because of some of the community issues surrounding Mauna Kea. However, it would not bode well for us as a nation, and could very well signal an end to any major astronomy investment on American soil. We would indeed appear quite hypocritical to lament the loss of excellence in math and science, and then "export" this opportunity to Chile without doing everything we can to keep the TMT in the United States.

In this regard, we discussed the race between the TMT and the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) for both support and funding. This matter will most certainly heat up as both telescope projects hope that the National Science Foundation (NSF)

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TMT in the United States.

In this regard, we discussed the race between the TMT and the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) for both support and funding. This matter will most certainly

will cover their operation and maintenance costs. As our federal budgetary outlook continues to weaken, the likelihood that NSF will be able to cover the costs for both telescopes is nil. In fact, NSF's astronomy budget would need to double to cover the TMT's operations and maintenance costs.

Both Drs. Yang and Chamean expressed their commitment to work with the Big Island community to hopefully enhance educational opportunities. Having been involved with the formation of Aha Ku Mauna, and later with NASA in urging them to undertake an Environmental Impact Statement for the Keck Outriggers initiative, it is clear to me that if the TMT initiative is to succeed, there must be broad educational opportunities offered, and meaningful career pathways developed on the Big Island. It needs to be simple, foundational and far-reaching.

As I understand it, preliminary discussions about a possible mitigation measure are underway involving both the Native Hawaiian languages leadership at the University of Hawaii (UH) at Hilo and the Hawaii Community College (HawCC). A simple, over-arching mitigation measure could be that Native Hawaiians be provided scholarships to attend school at either campus. Existing scholarship funds could then be re-invested to support other disadvantaged groups. In fact, this may be a good way to get better traction on the University's Native Hawaiian scholarship program, funded out of your research overhead, which you announced at the recent commencement exercises. It would serve as a precursor to the larger potential TMT scholarship initiative.

With additional mitigation funds, important investments could be made strategically from the Imloua Astronomy Center, the UH Hilo Hawaiian Language College, the technical/vocational trades program at HawCC, to an increase in the science and math offerings at both schools. The underlying premise should be, however, to beckon as many Native Hawaiian students into higher education as possible, irrespective of a stated interest or major.

As I understand it, the University continues with its Comprehensive Master Plan process. Once completed, many are hopeful that it will provide a blueprint for Mauna Kea's future. If TMT is to be part of this future, parallel discussions and processes are necessary. As such, having a unified team of UH/Hilo and HawCC leading the effort is most important to keep a healthy community dialogue ongoing

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which will hopefully result in a meaningful mitigation plan. At the appropriate time, technical discussions involving the Institute for Astronomy will be important, particularly as the issues of viewing time and mitigation funding are raised.

I hope I can count on your continued support for this initiative. Your putting the University's resources behind the Big Island team will indeed be most helpful. I will keep you informed of developments on my end, and I trust you will do the same. At the appropriate time and assuming all continues to progress positively forward, let's plan to bring the parties together for a meeting. The window for action is fairly narrow, but it is one for which we must lean forward and work to achieve for the sake of astronomy in Hawaii and in our nation.

Aloha,



DANIEL K. INOUE
United States Senator

DKI:jsd

cc: Dr. Rose Tseng
Dr. Rockne Freitas
Dr. Rolf Kudritzki

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Aloha,

DANIEL K./INGUYE United States Senator

Dr. Rockne Freitas Dr. Rolf Kudritzki